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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: NEW IRAQ STRATEGY, ARAB-ISRAELI CRISIS

11. SUMMARY: Privately owned "Al-Watan" accuses America of giving "false promises" to Arabs when it needs their support, and also posits that the crises facing America and Israel in the Middle East are increasing as time goes by. Government-owned "Oman" thinks Democrats' objections to a troop increase in Iraq are "justified."
END SUMMARY.

COVERAGE

12. President Bush's new Iraq strategy did not receive extensive or prominent coverage in Omani dailies this week. Dailies did include front page headlines of Secretary Rice's Middle East tour, with text drawn from wire services.

BLOCK QUOTES: "FALSE PROMISES" FOR PALESTINIANS

13. On January 13, the privately owned daily "Al-Watan" (circulation 42,000) wrote, "Playing with Wasted Time":

"It seems that America does not remember that the Palestinian issue is the source of all Middle East conflict. American administrations give no attention to the Arab-Israeli conflict unless there is a crisis, and then they start giving false promises to the Arabs about how America will lift them out of the crisis if they cooperate. However, once the difficult time ends the United States forgets the whole issue. Thus everyone knows that Washington's desire to get Arab cooperation on the Iraqi and Iranian fronts is the real reason behind [Secretary] Rice's most recent visit. It will probably end up like the previous promises from America in the 1990s from Bush's father, where he promised to solve the Palestinian issue if Arabs cooperated on getting Iraq out of Kuwait. But once the war ended he forgot his promise."

DEMOCRATS' OBJECTIONS ON IRAQ "JUSTIFIED"

14. State-owned daily "Oman" (circulation 38,000) published a January 12 editorial entitled "American Strategy and the Future of Iraq":

"Only time will tell how successful President Bush's plan will be, which involves ending the cycle of violence in Iraq by increasing U.S. forces (over the Democrats' objections) and curbing Iranian/Syrian power. Democrats' objections are justified,

especially given the most recent polling numbers that indicate 61 percent of the American public is against the war. These statistics guarantee that Iraq will remain one of the hottest issues in the American media."

TIME "NOT IN AMERICANS' FAVOR" IN MIDEAST

15. On January 14, "Al-Watan" also published an editorial about the American and Israeli dilemma in the Middle East entitled "Submissive Thinking and Weak Wills":

"Maybe the Arabs are betting on the element of time when it comes to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including some Arab leaders who believe that time is in our favor and we should not make any decisions that do not satisfy us. A careful reading of the current international and regional situation proves this to be true. Israel and America have found themselves in multiple dilemmas. America confronts the Iraqi situation, the Iranian nuclear file, and now a possible crisis in relations with Pakistan after the Negroponte report...time is not in the Americans' favor in the Middle East."

GRAPPO